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ABSTRACT

To determine communication conflict style differences in black and white subjective cultures, 123 black and 180 white university students were administered the Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument (OCCI), a scale measuring the three conflict management styles: control (confrontation); nonconfrontation; and solution-orientation. Results indicated that blacks and whites differed in the way they managed relational conflicts; that males, regardless of ethnicity, engaged in significantly more indirect, nonconfrontational conflict strategies than did females; and that black females tended to use slightly more confrontation style strategies while white females engaged in more solution orientation strategies in dealing with relationship conflicts. (MM)

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES IN BLACK AND WHITE SUBJECTIVE CULTURE

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES IN BLACK AND WHITE SUBJECTIVE CULTURES

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to determine communication conflict style differences in Black and White subjective culture. Specifically, three major findings emerged from the study: First, there are indeed communication conflict style differences between Blacks and Whites in managing relational conflicts. Second, males, regardless of ethnicity, engage in significantly more indirect, nonconfrontation conflict strategies than females. Third, Black females overall, tend to use slightly more confrontation style strategies in dealing with relationship conflicts, while White females overall, engage in significantly more solution-orientation strategies than Black females.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES IN BLACK AND WHITE SUBJECTIVE CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a pervasive and an inevitable part of social life. It is an inescapable phenomenon that penetrates all types of relationships, in all walks of life. Conflict may serve either constructive or destructive ends, depending on how one manages conflict in an interpersonal situation. Unfortunately, while conflict is such an omnipresent phenomenon in all kinds of interpersonal and social situations, few intercultural communication researchers have paid systematic attention to conflict and conflict management style as vital constructs for intercultural theory-building and research.

Most research activities in the interpersonal cross-cultural realm have focused on the "positive" dimensions (such as self-disclosure or similarity-attraction paradigm) of interpersonal transaction, and have largely neglected the "negative" dimensions (such as conflict or relational burnout and stress) of interpersonal relationship development. Most researchers seem intent to uncover the positive ingredients that promote relationship growth, but neglect to examine the dimensions that may cause potential intracultural and intercultural misunderstandings. The objective of this study is to fill such a gap. Although there is a rich body of theoretical works on conflict resolution tactics (Coser, 1956; Deutsch, 1973; Filley, 1975; Fisher, 1969; Folger & Poole, 1984; Morley & Stephenson, 1977; Rubin & Brown, 1975; Walton, 1969), relatively little research has been conducted on interpersonal conflict management styles across ethnic groups or across different cultures. The handful of studies that have examined interpersonal/small group conflicts have been primarily interested in testing the validity and reliability of their newly-developed conflict instruments (for example, Donohue, 1981; Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Sillars, Coletti, Parry, & Rogers, 1982), and they have uncovered conflict management

patterns in primarily white, middle-class samples. There is, however, a dearth of research that systematically compares conflict management styles between ethnic or cultural groupings--especially from a communication-oriented focus.

The present study is designed to explore the communication differences and similarities of conflict management styles in Black and White subjective cultures. Conflict, is conceptually defined in this paper as the perceived disagreement between two interdependent parties due to incompatible goals, incompatible resources, and/or incompatible personalities, values, beliefs, or attitudes. Conflict management style is defined as the characteristic mode of managing conflict in an interpersonal situation. Based on the two dimensions of "concern for self" and "concern for others," previous conflict research (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Sillars et al, 1982) has identified three primary conflict management styles: Control style, nonconfrontational style, and solution-orientation style. Specifically, the primary research question in this research asks: Are there any communication style differences between Blacks and Whites in their managing of relational conflicts? The secondary research question asks: Are there any gender-related communication style differences between males and females in their managing of relational conflicts?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Subjective culture, in this essay, is conceptually defined as "a cultural group's characteristic way of viewing the man-made part of the environment. It is the reaction of a homogeneous group of people to the social environment" (Triandis, 1976, p. 11; Triandis, 1972). According to Triandis (1976), some of the major determinants of subjective culture are derived mainly from historical events. In the context of Black and White subjective culture, these historical events (such as slave trade, discriminatory treatment, status difference) affect how the Blacks and Whites perceive their social environment and

ultimately affect the development of different social values, roles, norms, and distinctive Black and White communication patterns.

On the verbal communication level, numerous researchers (Baratz, 1973;Dillard, 1972; Kochman, 1972; Labov, 1972; Rich, 1974; Shuter, 1982; Smith, 1973) have explored the differences and similarities between Black and White styles of language usage. For example, Dillard (1972) found that Black English is composed of a mixture of African languages and American English through a systematic modification process of pidginization-creolization-decreolization. Baratz (1973) uncovered significant structural differences between Black English and American English--such as the use of double negatives as "he don't know nothing," rather than "he knows nothing," or committing the linking verb such as "he goin," instead of "he is going." Labov (1972), in analyzing the internal structure of Black English Vernacular (BEV) , argued cogently against the language deprivation theory concerning BEV, and delineated the coherent logic of BEV as operative in the inner cities of American society. Finally, Shuter (1982), in testing for Black and White differences in initial interaction, found that Blacks directed more questions and conversed significantly longer with females than did Whites. In addition, males and females varied their questioning patterns depending on the partner's racial background.

On the nonverbal communication level, specific nonverbal differences between Blacks and Whites have been revealed in the use of time (Pennington, 1974; Smith, 1973), in the use of eye contact (Blubaugh & Pennington, 1976; Johnson,1972), and in the use of nonverbal kinesic movements (Johnson, 1976; Smith, 1983). For example, Smith (1973) found that since Blacks have not historically felt that their destinies or time were within their own control, they tend to have a more relaxed attitude toward time than their white counterparts. Blubaugh and Pennington (1976) found that the practice of "rolling the eyes" to show disapproval of an

authority figure and the avoidance of eye contact are common to Blacks and serve more distinctive functions than those of Whites (Pennington, 1979). Smith (1983) found that Black females did not smile more often than Black males when interacting in same-sex dyads. In addition, Black females maintained less eye contact with their partner than White females; however, Black female dyads leaned synchronously more often than either White female dyads or Black male dyads. Finally, according to Johnson (1976), Black youngsters typically engage in a "limp stance" of lowering the head and relaxing the body when they are in a conflict situation with an authority figure. The "limp stance" acts as a defensive mechanism which nonverbally communicates: "I am no longer a person, a person receiving your message of reprimand; I am only an object" (Johnson, 1976, p. 263). Further,when a Black female is caught in a conflict situation, she will typically assume a "hand-on-hip stance" which usually communicates aggression, anger, disgust, or other hostile negative feelings toward her conflict partner (Johnson, 1976, p. 267).

However, while there has been some research on Black and White verbal and nonverbal communication differences, no in-depth communication study emerged on the theme of Black and White conflict management strategies until the publication of Kochman's (1981) book on Black and White Styles in Conflict. Based on ethnograp ic materials and participant-observation method, Kochman found that Blacks and Whites in a conflict situation, are divided not only over content but also over the conflict process--how disagreement on the issue is to be appropriately handled. It is important to note,however, that his analysis on Black and White conflict style differences is based primarily on the communication differences between the "black community" people (called elsewhere as ghetto blacks, inner-city blacks, or lower-class blacks) and the main-stream, white middle-class Americans.

According to Kochman's (1981) qualitative analysis of Black and White styles in conflict, there is a unique "Black mode" of conflict management style, as compared to a unique "White mode" of conflict management pattern. The "Black mode" of conflict style is "high-keyed: animated, interpersonal, and confrontational"; the "White mode" of conflict style is "relatively low-keyed: dispassionate, impersonal, and non-challenging" (Kochman, 1981, p. 18). In brief, the Blacks tend to use more emotionally expressive and involving modes of conflict management strategies, while the Whites tend to engage in more emotional self-restraint discussions and attempt to understate and diffuse the intense, conflict situation. The Blacks are more affectively direct in their dealing with interpersonal conflict situations, while the Whites assume the posture of a cool, impersonal persuader in seeking for a closure to the conflict argument. In accounting for the different conflict management strategies of Blacks and Whites, Kochman (1981) explains the differences with a cultural-historical account. He argues that the Black subjective culture values the qualities of emotional expressiveness and intense involvement in any socio-cultural activities. Hence, in an argumentative situation, full participation entails a "mind/body involvement of considerable depth, what blacks call <u>getting down into</u> the mode through which emotional release and spiritual rejuvenation are effected" (p. 108). Conversely, the White subjective culture treasures emotional self-restraint in a heated debate situation and the members are guided by their cultural norms of " <u>good taste</u>, which have set ceilings on how intense expressive behavior may appropriately become" (pp. 114-115). Interestingly, while Kochman (1981) argues for the importance of the variable of race over social class in his Black and White conflict management analysis, Triandis and Harvey (1976) argue for the conjoint importance of race and social structure (social class, sex, age, etc.) as

the two key factors that affect the psychological functioning of both Blacks and Whites. They defend and justify the "black community" group's open confrontational style by claiming that it is an adjustment strategy under the living conditions of the ghetto. In their own words, the "hardcore black" posture is a "healthy response to an 'unhealthy' environment" (p. 172).

In summary, in the context of Black and White conflict management style differences, the following hypotheses will be tested: (1) Blacks will be more likely to use direct confrontational style of conflict in an interpersonal situation than Whites; (2) Whites will be more likely to use indirect non-confrontational style of conflict than Blacks; and (3) Whites will be more likely to use solution-orientation style (for the sake of early closure) of conflict than Blacks.

In addition, based on past gender-related studies (Bernard, 1972; Haas, 1979; Henley, 1977; Key, 1975; Kramer, 1974; Lakoff, 1973, 1975; Pei, 1969), distinctive male and female communication differences have been found between the sexes. For example, Bernard (1972) found that while males tend to engage in direct, "instrumental style" of lecturing, argument, and debate in everyday conversations, females tend to typically engage in a more tactful, indirect "expressive style" of communication in everyday conversations than males. Lakoff (1973, 1975) found that the form of women's language is definitely more tentative and more polite than the men's. Other studies (McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, & Gale, 1977; Siegler & Siegler, 1976) also uncovered that females tend to employ more tag questions and verbal qualifiers than males. Finally, Nadler and Nadler (1984) concluded that in organizational negotiation settings, women project more low position commitment, uncertainty, politeness, and nonassertiveness in stating their viewpoints than their male counterparts. In brief, in a conflict negotiation situation, females will be more likely

than males to engage in indirect, "smoothing" conflict strategies, while males will be more likely than females to engage in direct, confrontational conflict strategies. In addition, females will be more likely than males to employ solution-orientation strategies to resolve an interpersonal conflict situation than males. Hence, the following gender-related conflict style differences will be tested: (1) Males will be more likely than females to engage in confrontational style of interpersonal conflict; (2) Females will be more likely than males to employ indirect nonconfrontational style of conflict; and (3) Females will be more likely than males to engage in solution-orientation style of conflict in managing an interpersonal conflict situation. The primary research question in this study asks: Are there any distinctive communication style differences between Black and White subjective cultures in their managing of relational conflicts? The secondary research question asks: Are there any gender-related conflict style differences in the Black and White subjective culture?

METHOD

Participants

A total of 318 respondents participated in the present study. They were contacted through University dormitories, black studies, and communication classes in an Eastern University. Of the sample, 39% of the participants were Blacks (n = 123), and 57% of the participants were Whites (n = 180). A total sample of 303 respondents were used for this particular study. In the Black sample,33% (n = 40) were males, and 67% (n = 83) were females. In the White sample, 36% (n = 64) were males, and 64% (n = 116) were females. The parents' top-three occupations for both samples were very similar. For both Black and White samples, the top-three father's occupations were: "manager/ administrative," "professional," and "sales" (the third category for the Black

sample was "service"). The top-three mother's occupations were: "clerical," "housewife," and "managerial/administrative" (the third category for the Black sample was "educational/professional"). Participants, overall, came from white-collar occupation, middle-class families.

In addition, a majority of the respondents (89% Blacks; 92% Whites) indicated that their conflict partners were from the same racial background. The mean length of their relationships with their conflict partners was 4 years. In providing the participants with different relational labels (such as "lover," "friend," "colleague") to describe their relationships with their conflict partners, both Blacks and Whites (52%; 48%) picked the label "lover" to characterize their close relationships, followed by the labels of "friend" (22%; 22%), "best friend" (12%; 17%), "relative" (8%; 9%), then others.

For the Black sample, the relational sex-compositions were: 53% female-male (n = 66), 25% male-female (n = 30), 14% female-female (n = 17), and 8% male-male (n = 10). In comparison, the White relational sex-compositions were: 41% female-male (n = 74), 23% female-female (n = 42), 22% male-female (n = 40), and 14% male-male (n = 24). For the Black sample, respondents indicated that their top-three relational conflict topics were: "general relationship issues," "controversial topics," and "sex-love-dating." For the White sample, they indicated (through open-ended responses) that their top-three relational conflict topics were: "relationship togetherness problems," "specific issues outside relationship," and "general relationship issues."

Procedures

Data were collected through Putnam and Wilson's (1982) Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument (OCCI). The instrument is a 30-item scale that measures the three conflict management styles of control (confrontation) dimension, nonconfrontation dimension, and solution-orientation dimension.

in interpersonal conflict situations. The OCCI is a communication-based conflict instrument that taps at the multidimensional nature of conflict styles, rather than measures one characteristic mode of conflict strategies. The instrument was assessed to have strong construct validity and predictive validity in three organizational conflict studies. High Cronbach reliability coefficients were obtained for each conflict style dimensions: control dimension, .82; nonconfrontation dimension, .93; and solution-orientation dimension, .88. For example, two control conflict items are: (1) I raise my voice when I'm trying to get this person to accept my position, (2) I dominate arguments until this person understands my position. Two nonconfrontation items are: (1) I keep quiet about my views in order to avoid disagreements, (2) I try to smooth over disagreements by making them appear unimportant. Two solution-orientation items are: (1) I offer creative solutions in discussions of disagreements, (2) I try to use this person's ideas to generate solutions to disagreements. There are 7 control items, 12 nonconfrontation items, and 11 solution-orientation items in the OCCI questionnaire. Specifically, the control (confrontation) dimension, the nonconfrontation dimension, and the solution-orientation dimension are conceptually defined as follows (Putnam & Wilson, 1982, p. 647):

(1) Control: direct control about the disagreement; arguing persistently for one's position, taking control of the interaction, and advocating one's position.

(2) Nonconfrontation: indirect strategies for handling a conflict; choices to avoid or withdraw from a disagreement; such communicative behaviors as silence, glossing over differences, and concealing ill feelings.

(3) Solution-orientation: direct communication about the conflict; behaviors that aim to find a solution, to integrate the needs of both parties, and to give in or compromise on issues.

The OCCI instrument was administered to the participants with the following instructions: "Think of disagreements you have encountered in situations with

a person in a close relationship. Then indicate on the scale below how frequently you engage in each of the following described behaviors. Do not respond to items with a particular disagreement in mind. Instead, keep in mind your experiences when disagreeing with this person in general." The reasons for picking a "close relationship" conflict situation were twofold: First, conflict is inevitable in any kind of close relationship because it involves two interdependent parties who are attached to each other; and second, the respondents can assess more accurately their characteristic modes of conflict style in an interpersonal situation than in an impersonal, social context. The instrument was pre-tested with a random sample of 15 individuals, and the instructions were perceived as clearly-worded and easily understood. A 7-point rating with 1 = Always, 2 = Very Often, 3 = Often, 4 = Sometimes, 5 = Seldom, 6 = Very Seldom, 7 = Never, was used following each OCCI item. Hence, low scores represent frequent use of certain conflict behaviors, and high scores represent infrequent use of certain conflict strategies.

In addition to the OCCI items, general questions concerning the relational closeness, relational satisfaction, interaction frequency, and conversational intimacy, conflict topics (open-ended question), and conflict negotiation style (open-ended question) between the respondent and his/her conflict partner were asked. Demographic variables such as the respondent and his/her partner's sex, age, ethnicity, and parents' occupations were also obtained.

RESULTS

Three separate 2 (ethnicity) by 2 (sex) analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test for the main and interaction effects of conflict management styles in Black and White subjective culture. For control (confrontation) style, a significant main effect was obtained for Black and White ethnicity variable [$F(1, 299) = 7.83$, $p < .005$]. No significant main effect was found for sex.

There was also no interaction effect between ethnicity and sex. For nonconfrontational management style, no significant main effect was found for ethnicity. However, significant main effect was found for sex [F (1, 299) = 10.53, $p < .001$], and a significant interaction effect was revealed for ethnicity and sex combined [F (1, 299) = 4.25, $p < .007$]. For solution-orientation conflict style, a significant main effect was uncovered for ethnicity [F (1, 299) = 18.52, $p < .005$]. However, no main effect was found for sex, and there was no interaction effect between ethnicity and sex for the solution-orientation dimension. Table 1 presents the mean scores and the standard deviations of the three dimensions of Black and White conflict management styles.

Table 1 about here

In order to gain a clearer picture between individual cell means, a series of t-test analyses were performed on all three conflict management styles between Blacks and Whites, and between males and females. For Black and White subjective culture, a significant mean difference was found for the control management dimension [t (301) = 2.67, $p < .008$]. No significant difference was uncovered for the nonconfrontation dimension. However, a significant mean difference was found for the solution-orientation dimension [t (301) = -3.99, $p < .001$]. In testing for overall male and female subjective culture differences, a significant mean difference was found for the nonconfrontation management style dimension [t (301) = -3.23, $p < .001$]. However, no significant difference was revealed for either the control dimension or the solution-orientation dimension. Table 2 presents the mean scores and the standard deviations of the three dimensions of male and female conflict management style differences.

Table 2 about here

Overall, results indicated that: (1) Blacks use significantly more controlling (confrontational) strategies than Whites in managing relational conflicts; (2) there is no significant difference between Blacks and Whites in the use of nonconfrontational strategies; and (3) Whites use significantly more solution-orientation strategies in managing relational conflicts. Two of the three research hypotheses were confirmed. However, while no difference was found between Blacks and Whites in the use of nonconfrontational conflict strategies, a significant difference was revealed for male and female use of indirect, nonconfrontational conflict style. Interestingly, however, it was the males who engage in more nonconfrontational tactics in managing relational conflicts (see Table 2) than the females.

In order to test for the relative contributions of the three conflict management dimensions in Black and White subjective culture, a discriminant analysis was performed. The discriminant analysis on the three conflict dimensions yielded an $R_c = .27$ (Eigenvalue = .08, Wilks Lambda = .93, Chi-squared = 23.01, df = 3, $p < .001$). The Black centroid was .34, and the White centroid was -0.23. Standardized discriminant function coefficients revealed the following order of relative contributions of the three conflict management dimensions: (1) solution-orientation (.82), (2) control (-.42), and (3) nonconfrontation (.19).

In addition, a discriminant analysis was used to differentiate male and female differences with a linear combination of the three conflict management dimensions. The discriminant analysis yielded an $R_c = .23$ (Eigenvalue = .05, Wilks Lambda =.95, Chi-squared = 15.75, df = 3, $p < .001$). The male centroid was -.32, and the female centroid was .16. Standardized discriminant function coefficients revealed the following: (1) nonconfrontation (.88), (2) control (.41), and (3) solution-orientation (.37).

In order to clarify the gender-related differences in conflict management styles within Black and White subjective culture, a series of t-test analyses were used. Table 3 reports the mean scores and standard deviations for Black males and Black females, and for White males and White females.

Table 3 about here

Results of t-tests indicated that there was a significant difference between Black males and Black females in the use of nonconfrontation conflict style [$t(121) = -2.08$, $p < .05$], however, Black males and Black females did not differ in the use of either control style of conflict or the use of solution-orientation style of conflict. Interestingly, it was the Black males who engaged in the use of more indirect nonconfrontation strategies than the Black females.

In comparing the differences between White males and White females on the three conflict management dimensions, a significant difference was found for the nonconfrontation style [$t(178) = -2.42$, $p < .01$] and the solution-orientation style of conflict [$t(178) = 3.31$, $p < .001$]. Similar to the findings in Black males and Black females' use of nonconfrontation conflict style, it was the White males who employed more indirect communication strategies such as silence or glossing over differences in managing relational conflicts than the White females. Conversely, the White females used significantly more solution-orientation strategies such as compromising or brainstorm solutions than White males in managing relational conflicts.

Finally, in comparing the results of t-test analyses between Black males and White males, and between Black females and White females on all three conflict management dimensions, the following picture emerged: (1) There

was no significant difference between Black males and White males in the use of control, nonconfrontation, and solution-orientation conflict dimensions; (2) a significant difference was found between Black females and White females in their use of control (confrontation) strategies [t (197) = 2.30, $p < .05$] with Black females using more control strategies in managing relational conflicts than White females; and (3) a significant difference was revealed between Black females and White females in their use of solution-orientation strategies [t (197) = -4.32, $p < 001$] with White females employing more solution-orientation strategies in managing relational conflicts than Black females.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that: First, Blacks use more control conflict strategies in managing relational conflicts than Whites; and secondly, Whites employ more solution-orientation strategies than Blacks in managing intraethnic relational disagreements. Hence, two of the three research hypotheses were confirmed. In the context of male and female relational conflict styles, it was found that males use significantly more nonconfrontation strategies in managing relational disagreements than females. Further analyses indicate that both Black males and White males engage in nonconfrontation mode of conflict to resolve relationship disagreement issues. Interesting differences emerge between Black females and White females in their use of control conflict mode and their use of solution-orientation conflict mode. Black females were found to use slightly more control conflict strategies than White females, while White females were found to use significantly more solution-orientation strategies than Black females in managing relational conflict issues.

This study sought to determine communication conflict style differences in Black and White subjective culture. Results of the study partially confirmed

Kochman's (1981) qualitative accounts concerning Black and White style differences in managing interpersonal conflict situations. Specifically, Kochman (1981) argues that Blacks, in an argumentative situation, value the qualities of emotional expressiveness and intense involvement in dealing with the conflict situation. In comparison, Whites, in a conflict situation, treasure the qualities of emotional self-restraint and analytical detachment. While no such communication difference was found between Black males and White males on all three conflict management dimensions, nevertheless, significant difference was uncovered between Black females and White females on the control (confrontation) conflict dimension, and the solution-orientation dimension. It was the Black females who employed more emotionally expressive and intense involvement strategies (the control dimension--such as raising voices or asserting one's opinion forcefully) than the other three groups. Conversely, it was the White females who engaged in significantly more emotionally self-restraint and analytical strategies (the solution-oriented dimension--such as mid-point settlement or offering trade-offs to reach solutions) than the other three groups.

Contrary to expectations, both Black males and White males engaged in significantly more nonconfrontation strategies (such as avoidance, downplaying the disagreement, or silence) than their female counterparts. Regardless of the ethnicity variable, males in this particular study, assume the "emotional inexpressive" role in dealing with close relationship conflicts. However, in the context of female conflict management dimensions, Black females in this study have been found to be more verbose and emotionally expressive than White females in their use of highly intense, confrontation style of conflict. Conversely, for the White females, they have been found to engage in significantly more emotional self-restraint and analytical conflict strategies in dealing with

relationship disagreement issues. Four possible reasons may be raised concerning the findings of this particular study in comparison with previous research (in particular, with that of Kochman's study): First, both Black and White samples for this study were drawn from middle-class families, whereas Kochman's (1981) qualitative study was based on a comparison of an inner-city Black sample, and a middle-class White sample. Second, the sample size of Black males in this study was relatively small (n = 40) and hence, the study did not tap the true conflict characteristics of a Black male group. Third, the study asked for perceived self-report data on Black and White conflict management style differences and hence, may not have captured the behavioral richness of Black and White conflict style strategies. Finally, perhaps in the context of managing close relationship conflicts, the conjoint effect of both ethnicity and sex should be considered. Based on the ANOVA results and the Discriminant Analysis findings, while the ethnicity variable has an effect on the solution-orientation dimension and the control (confrontation) dimension, no significant main effect was uncovered for ethnicity on the nonconfrontation (avoidance) conflict dimension. Rather, a significant main effect was found for sex on the nonconfrontation dimension, and also a significant interaction effect was revealed for ethnicity and sex combined. Hence, we may argue that while the cultural norms of emotional expressiveness and emotional self-restraint have something to do with Black females' confrontation conflict style and with White females' solution-orientation conflict style, it is the conjoint effect of ethnicity and sex that affect the use of avoidance or nonconfrontation strategies in both the Black male group and the White male group. This may be due to the fact that American society as a whole still adheres to the sex-role social norms that encourages emotional expressiveness and compromising behaviors in the females but not necessarily in the male subjective culture. Males, regardless of ethnicity in this particular study, still enact the "emotionally constipated"

role of silence or avoidance in dealing with problematic issues in their close relationships, whereas, for the female group, they either engage in emotional confrontation strategies or analytical compromising strategies in managing their relationship disagreement situations.

In sum, there are three major implications in this study. First, the results demonstrate that there are indeed communication style differences between Blacks and Whites in their handling of relational conflicts. Second, males, regardless of ethnic backgrounds, engage in significantly more avoidance, nonconfrontation strategies in dealing with relationship disagreement issues than females. Third, Black females overall, tend to use slightly more emotionally expressive strategies than White females, while White females overall, tend to engage in more analytical, emotional self-restraint strategies than the Black females.

In terms of research recommendations, future studies should move beyond self-report data on Black and White conflict management styles, and investigate the actual conflict negotiation tactics that Blacks and Whites, and males and females use in managing problematic relationship issues. Future research should also pay close attention to the effects of dyadic compositions (ethnicity X sex) on conflict negotiation styles. Finally, future studies should also adopt a time-series process-orientation in delineating both the verbal and nonverbal moves of Blacks and Whites in their handling of interpersonal disagreement issues. In brief, future research direction on cultural conflict management styles may wish to extend the findings of the present study, and engage in programmatic research on the relationship between culture and emotional expressiveness, and between gender and emotional expressiveness across different ethnic and cultural groupings.

The results of this study have provided partial evidence for conflict management style differences in Black and White subjective culture. By delineating the value-orientation differences (emotional expressiveness versus emotional self-

restraint) between Blacks and Whites in the context of managing close relationship disagreements, hopefully, we may become more aware of the unique communication patterns that characterize these two cultural systems.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Black and White Conflict Management Dimensions

	BLACKS (n=123)		WHITES (n=180)	
Conflict Style	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Control (7 items)	26	8.3	29	6.8
Nonconfrontation (12 items)	57	12.6	56	10.6
Solution-Oriented (11 items)	39	9.2	35	6.9

Note. The scales were scored with 1 = always and 7 = never. Low scores represent frequent use, while high scores represent infrequent use.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Male and Female Conflict Management Dimensions

	MALES (n=104)		FEMALES (n=199)	
Conflict Style	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Control (7 items)	27	8.1	28	7.2
Nonconfrontation (12 items)	53	11.7	58	11.1
Solution-Oriented (11 items)	38	7.5	36	8.4

Note. The scales were scored with 1 = always and 7 = never. Low scores represent frequent use, while high scores represent infrequent use.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for gender-related Black and White Conflict Management Dimensions

Conflict Style	BLACKS (n=123)				WHITES (n=180)			
	Males (n=40)		Females (n=83)		Males (n=64)		Females (n=116)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Control (7 items)	26	9.6	27	7.7	28	7.0	29	6.7
Nonconfrontation (12 items)	53	15.1	59	10.9	53	9.1	57	11.2
Solution-Oriented (11 items)	39	9.7	39	9.0	37	5.7	34	7.3

Note. The scales were scored with 1 = always and 7 = Never. Low scores represent frequent use, while high scores represent infrequent use.